

News Release

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Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, Survey Reveals Most Thyroid Disorder Patients Find Road to Diagnosis Long and Distressing

- **Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and Thyroid Federation International (TFI) launch 10th global campaign to raise awareness of thyroid disorders and help improve diagnoses**
- **Results of recent survey show a need for faster diagnosis**
- **Patients perceive their journey to diagnosis as stressful**

Darmstadt, Germany, May 22, 2018 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today announced its support of the 10th International Thyroid Awareness Week (ITAW), which runs from May 21 to 27. The annual awareness campaign, which is run in collaboration between Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and TFI aims to highlight some of the lesser-known aspects of thyroid disorders.

“Because thyroid disorders are still poorly understood and often go undiagnosed, our collaboration with TFI aims to ensure that people have the information they need to recognize symptoms associated with potential thyroid disorders,” said Francois Feig, Head of the Global Business Franchise General Medicine & Endocrinology at Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. “Patients can then seek advice from their doctor who can perform the necessary examination, usually including a simple blood test, to check the function of the thyroid gland.”

Around 1.6 billion people worldwide are thought to be at risk of a thyroid disorder, with hundreds of millions of people living with a thyroid condition right now.¹ Up to 60% of those living with a thyroid disorder are currently undiagnosed and may be



needlessly struggling through their everyday lives without knowing the root cause of their symptoms.²

“Right now, there are hundreds of millions of people living with the burden of a thyroid disorder, without having ever received a diagnosis and appropriate treatment. For this year’s International Thyroid Awareness Week, now in its 10th year, we’re calling for change worldwide,” said Ashok Bhaseen, President of TFI. “We want to make a positive difference to the lives of millions who are impacted by thyroid disorders.”

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and TFI are encouraging people to understand the thyroid’s function and recognize symptoms – to help reduce the amount of time and stress a diagnosis can take – with its latest ITAW campaign: ‘Time to Check Your Body’s Control Panel.’ The campaign highlights the thyroid gland’s important role in the body as a ‘master controller’ of our metabolism, and provides information that may help spot the signs when it might be malfunctioning.

To mark this year’s ITAW, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany and TFI commissioned an international survey among thyroid disorder patients, which suggests that the journey to diagnosis can be difficult and distressing for many affected by thyroid disorders.

The survey – focusing on hypothyroidism patients in six countries – revealed that 70% of hypothyroidism patients found the road to diagnosis a stressful one.³ In fact, 30% said that getting their thyroid disorder diagnosis was as stressful, if not more so, than going on a first date,³ and 28% said it was as stressful as struggling to pay their bills.³

Before receiving a diagnosis, most respondents were completely unaware their symptoms were being caused by a thyroid disorder (70%).³ Additionally, many patients waited months or years before receiving their diagnosis – 40% had to wait between four months and two years.³

The survey also revealed the variety of ways in which an undiagnosed thyroid disorder can affect a person’s daily life; with almost half of respondents (49%) saying their physical appearance was impacted before diagnosis.³ Additionally,

31% of respondents felt their confidence was affected by their undiagnosed thyroid disorder.³

Campaign materials can be accessed via the campaign website at www.thyroidaware.com. These materials include a brochure and a symptom checker for thyroid disorders that provide information to help people identify if they could be suffering unnecessarily.

ITAW is an established and highly regarded global awareness campaign endorsed by the American Thyroid Association (ATA), the European Thyroid Association (ETA), and the Chinese Society of Endocrinology (CSE). For more information, visit the ITAW website: www.thyroidaware.com.

References

- ¹ Khan A, Khan MM, Akhtar S. Thyroid disorders, etiology and prevalence. J Med Sci 2002; 2: 89–94. Available at <http://www.scialert.net/fulltext/?doi=jms.2002.89.94&org=11>. Last accessed February 2018
- ² American Thyroid Association. General Information/Press Room. Available at: <https://www.thyroid.org/media-main/about-hypothyroidism/> Last accessed February 2018
- ³ Censuswide. Thyroid Disorder Awareness International Survey (Tab 3). Commissioned by Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. April 2018

About the survey

The global omnibus survey was conducted by Censuswide, with online interviews conducted between 9th – 24th April 2018 with 18 – 84-year-olds with hypothyroidism.

Over 1,500 respondents from six countries worldwide were polled:

- 250 Hypothyroidism patients in Germany
- 250 Hypothyroidism patients in Italy
- 250 Hypothyroidism patients in Spain
- 250 Hypothyroidism patients in Poland
- 250 Hypothyroidism patients in Czech Republic
- 250 Respondents who have a thyroid disorder in Russia

About Thyroid Federation International (TFI)

TFI first convened in Toronto at the 11th International Thyroid Congress in September 1995. Diana Meltzer Abramsky, who in 1980 founded the Thyroid Foundation of Canada in Kingston, Ontario Canada, first advocated the vision of a world thyroid patient organization to deal with the problems of thyroid disease in a global perspective. Since then the Federation has grown to include thyroid organizations in many parts of the world, including Europe, North and South America, Australia, and Japan. TFI is an independent, worldwide network of patient-support organizations. The Federation works together for the benefit of those affected by thyroid disorders by providing information and raising awareness, by encouraging and assisting the formation of patient-oriented groups, and by working closely with the medical professions. TFI has a Medical Advisory Board, which consists of some of the most eminent thyroid specialists in the world. For more information, please visit <http://www.thyroid-fed.org/tfi-wp/>

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Founded in 1668, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, holds the global rights to the „Merck“ name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.